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SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-second year

Letter dated 14 February 1997 from the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to the statement issued on 5 February 1997 by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the Niger.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under the item entitled "Human rights questions: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms", and of the Security Council.

(Signed) N. H. BIEGMAN
Permanent Representative of the
Netherlands to the United Nations

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ANNEX

Statement issued on 5 February 1997 by the Presidency of the European Union concerning the Niger

[Original: English and French]

The European Union was concerned at the arrest of opposition political leaders and of certain participants in the demonstrations which took place on 11 January 1997 and welcomed their release on 23 January 1997.

Nevertheless, it remains concerned that the accusations against the opposition leaders have not yet been withdrawn and by the reactivation of the "State security court".

The European Union calls on the Government of the Niger to moderate its attitude to the opposition and to respect fully fundamental freedoms, including freedom of opinion and freedom of the press, and the rule of law. In this context, it notes with satisfaction the message addressed to the nation on 23 January by the President of the Republic.

It expresses the hope that all the political forces in the Niger can engage in dialogue on a long-term basis with a view to national reconciliation, which is essential for the country's recovery.

The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, the associated country Cyprus and the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this statement.